

Our 5 Year Old Leader

Inspiring those around her to do big things

5am, at the gym, while grinding it out on the elliptical machine something suddenly came over me. Tears started rolling down my cheek as I look back on 2016 and lessons my daughter Shanley taught me, well both my daughters for that matter. Most, in this situation would look around the room to see if anyone saw them crying. Others, would put their head down to hid their tears while grabbing a towel to quickly wipe them away so nobody could see or judge them as weak.

I, wore these tears as a badge of honor. They are tears of pride and joy - for my 5 year old daughter taught me lessons about being a leader only she could. Lessons like "Leaders don't hide dad." This came when I felt guilt for talking so much about type 1 diabetes this year. Feeling so much passion about spreading the word and showing people what it means to fight the fight. I began thinking about Shay. I remember walking upstairs after writing an article and posting it on Facebook. "Sarah, do you think it is right - posting all of this stuff about diabetes and telling these stories about Shanley? She's only 5... she really doesn't understand what I am doing or why I am doing it. Do you think I should try explaining it to her and finding out what she thinks?" So many questions were going through my head that day. "Yes, you should sit her down and tell her. Ask her what she thinks. But, remember she's only 5 and might not understand. Don't get frustrated. Either way, you and I must keep sharing our daughter's story. We both know it isn't about us. It's about all of the families we can help." Knowing Sarah was right when saying this, I thought what the heck. I will sit down with Shay and talk it through... If nothing else, I'm doing it to make myself feel better knowing I spoke with her.



What happened next... I could have never guessed, "Dad, sharing my story will help other kids like me who have type one diabetes. Telling them how I am doing and the things we do to take care of me is the right thing to do. Leaders don't hide dad." Shanley said to me. I will never forget, in that moment I felt like I was having an outer body experience. "She is 5 right? She doesn't understand leadership at 5 right? she can't know how these stories we share help other kids and families cope with their struggles fighting the T1D fight, can she?" I thought to myself. How do I respond to such words of leadership from my 5 year old daughter.... where does this come from? I said nothing, I knelt down - gave her a hug and whispered in her ear, "I Love You", there was nothing else to say. She taught me a lesson that day. The lesson = **LEADERS DON'T HIDE.**



Continuing to reflect on moments in 2016 another story popped in my head. I started talking to myself until I realized it was out loud. I was talking to myself about the time when I asked Shanley about her pump. I had to stop pumping my legs and arms on the elliptical machine. The thought consumed me. Like when you get kicked in the stomach and lose your breath. You can't breathe and all you can think about is "Deep breath, just breathe" as you fight for air.

"Shanley, so what do you think about this pump you wear every day. The one in your "Spi Belt" wrapped around your waist. Do you hope one day you won't have to wear it? Do you hope one day we find a cure for diabetes and you can be like the other kids at school?" I asked Shanley as we were getting ready for bed one night.



Diabetes supplies she needs on a daily basis

"I love my pump dad!" She said with excitement - as if it was magical like her American Girl doll. "My T1D makes me special Dad. My pump shows everyone I am special. I want to show people I'm special because when I do that than others with type one diabetes will know they are special too." Shanley said, as serious as a drill sergeant demanding his troops get in order but, with a smile on her face. Again, in that moment I couldn't believe my ears. I will never forget thinking , "This is the beauty of being 5 years old. Seeing the world through a pair of eyes that have not been tarnished. From a heart that is pure. If we could only bottle it up and give this inspiration to others with T1D who are not so hopeful." She gave me a huge hug and said, "Dad it's time for bed." as I was deep in thought about this lesson my daughter taught me. The lesson = **BELIEVE - WE ARE ALL SPECIAL IN OUR OWN WAY.**



After catching my breath from the burst of pride and additional tears of joy. Just knowing words like this can only come from a heart of gold, a leader who doesn't yet know she is one. I started moving my legs again and chugging as hard as I could on my elliptical. "Murph, you are one lucky man. Move your butt and keep healthy. How could you ever pass up seeing your girls become young ladies, women and mothers." I thought to myself.

The whole ride home I couldn't stop thinking about giving Shay a hug when I got home. I couldn't stop thanking god for bringing this inspiration into my life. When I got home Shay was running around like she always does in the morning. I grabbed her, gave her a HUGE hug and whispered into her ear, "I love you. You, your sister and mom are the best thing that ever happened to me." I set her down and she said, "Dad I wouldn't want it any other way. You, Mom our family... it's perfect. Even my diabetes."



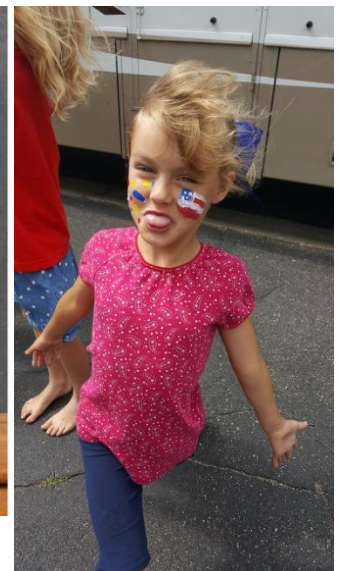
I ask YOU to join our family in the fight to cure Type 1 Diabetes. The fight to help those who are struggling to afford their insulin, their pump supplies, their medical supplies, their insurance. The fight to help those with Type 1 Diabetes feel special again.

Let's come together and support Shanley... continue to show her lessons of leadership, like she shows us every day, by supporting her in her fight against Type 1 Diabetes. You will do this by participating in our **JDRF One | Walk** and contributing to **TeamSugarShay.com**. Because, we can't do this without you.

One person can make a difference - with the help of others.

Shay, I love you, you have taught me lessons about being a better person and a better leader. I know you will make a difference in our world. You will change people's lives. Thank you my princess.

Please make a donation



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